## GOING FORWARD PART ONE



RON CROSS
Commission Chairman

he dust has cleared and we are ready to move on to the November General Election to see who occupies the Governor's mansion and several other state positions. However, we are set in Columbia County since none of the winners in the primary and runoff elections have any additional opponents. Current District 1 Commissioner and Vice-Chair Doug Duncan will be the new county-wide elected Chairman and newly elected Commissioners Connie Melear and Dewey Galeas will join Trey Allen and Gary Richardson as district Commissioners. I sincerely believe that this group will serve all of the citizens of Columbia County in a most extraordinary way. We have the benefit of three very experienced commissioners joined by two very qualified new members; a perfect blend of the old and new.

In my almost sixteen years in this office, there have been many exciting, positive things that have happened. From a population that has gone from 89,000 to over 150,000 to the expansion of almost every facet of our normal existence; more houses, more commercial and retail buildings, more road improvements, more medical facilities, more churches, and many, many more quality of life improvements.

However; in an atmosphere of constant change in our high-growth county, there are certain things that began to stand-out as fundamental to a successful county. Certain things that you feel blend together that maintain high-growth and yet offer a much desirable place to live, work and raise a family. Things that make people outside the county want to move in, and things that make those that live here want to stay; the combination of appreciating the past and having a vibrant vision for the future. Being financially conservative but also having the vision and courage to take a chance when it seems appropriate. Some of the things that I feel are important are basic and others tend to be a little more intangible.

The next several months this mailer will focus on several areas that I feel the new commission must do to keep the county moving forward. They are not in a strict order of priority, but some so basic that they will appear first. In a dynamic county priorities can certainly change, but emphasis must always be placed on those topics that affect everyone equally.

Ok! Drum roll please...

#### **NUMBER ONE:**

#### **CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN AND FUND PUBLIC SAFETY**

This is the first duty of a County Commission according to the Georgia Constitution, but it is not always a top priority. I have maintained during my entire tenure that: "If you don't feel safe, very little else in your community matters; all the good things to do and places to go become tainted if you do not feel safe being there." This fortunately has not been a problem during my time in office. We are blessed with a great Sheriff's Department, Fire Rescue, ambulance service, and EMA. Under Sheriff Clay Whittle, crime has continually dropped while the population has increased. That is a most unusual combination that you would not normally expect. The Sheriff has always worked well with the commission and been very cooperative in lean budget years and expansion planning. His immediate staff of Chief Deputy Mike Adams, Majors Sharif Chochol, Steve Morris, and Rick Whitaker, mean that we are in good hands for many years to come.

Our rather new county fire service under Chief Jeremy Wallen continues to add stations and equipment to handle larger commercial buildings and

additional residents. His staff of Deputy Chief Jimmie Paschal, Assistant Chief of Administration, Brent Willis, and Deputy Chief of Operations, Danny Kuhlmann, brings many years of experience to the department and years of training under previous Chief Doug Cooper.

Their recent certification as a Class 1 ISO rating is almost unheard of for a county of our size. This encompasses not only fire protection but also recognizes abundant water supplies and excellent communication service. This certification is one of only 14 in Georgia and one of less than 300 national wide. Quite an achievement!

Our contract with Gold Cross EMS has been very successful for almost twenty years. They provide a service to county residents that far exceeds the service that a county ran service could provide. In addition, it is much less expensive than the previous county ran ambulance service. Vince Brogdon and Steven Vincent, and the recently retired Frank Lindley, have always been very cooperative in continually attempting to improve service to our county. Major John T. Y. Smith is head of Columbia County Operations for Gold Cross and works daily with our staff on improving service to our citizens.

Our in-house Emergency Management Agency, under EMA Director Andy Leanza, is another important part of our public safety service. Since being Director, Andy has restored our Mobile Command Center to its original condition and it is now available for use throughout the region. That department recently received the maximum reimbursement from GEMA and FEMA for debris clean-up from the results of hurricane Irma. They have also partnered with the local Red Cross to store beds and supplies in Columbia County to accelerate response time should we need to provide shelter for people displaced in severe weather. Andy is a former EMA Director in Montgomery County and an Area Field Coordinator for GEMA. He is currently working on his Bachelor of Science degree.

It is imperative that public safety remain a top priority.

## NUMBER TWO: FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

Being the only county in Georgia outside of metro Atlanta with a AAA Bond Rating speaks highly of fiscal responsibility. The rating agencies not only look at credit scores, reserve funds, amount of debt, revenue potential, and permanent employers, but also the sustainability of population growth, infrastructure improvements, workforce availability, diversity of the tax base, and quality of life attractions for the general public. They also study qualifications of the county staff, salary levels, and the plans for staff retention. In addition, study the property tax history, percentage of collection, and compare us with counties of like size and demographics. They have been surprised that we maintain our rating while reducing property taxes four of the last six years.

Speaking of staff qualifications, congratulations to Ms. Leanne Reece, CPA and Director of Internal Services. Under her guidance, our finance department has won the highest award for municipal accounting for the last twenty consecutive years. Leanne has a Bachelor of Business Administration, Accounting from Georgia Southern University and has been a Certified Public Accountant for 26 years. In addition, our finance department has won the award for budget preparation for nine consecutive years.

We have saved over five million dollars of tax payer money over the last several bond issues because of improving our rating from AA to AAA.

continued from first page

It is imperative that we maintain our AAA bond rating with no property tax increase.

#### **NUMBER THREE:** MAINTAIN THE EXISTING PROFESSIONAL STAFF

In my many years of being a member of the Board of Managers and the Executive Committee of our state-wide county organization, ACCG, I did not encounter a single county with staff that equaled ours. We have the most experienced, qualified, and professional upper level staff members in the state. Even the largest counties in Georgia do not have the entire management staff equal to Columbia County.

Scott Johnson is probably the top county administrator in the state. His past law enforcement experience, his education, and time spent under former administrator Steve Szablewski put Scott in demand state-wide for teaching and management training. His grasp of county and state government, municipal financing, organizational structures, and public administration is unequaled. His expertise in assembling bond issues, SPLOST programs, and future planning is also unequalled.

Scott has an undergraduate degree in Criminal Justice from Thomas University and a Master of Public Administration (MPA) from Columbus State University. In addition, he has many certifications from his experience as a Columbia County Deputy and a Georgia Highway Patrolman. He is currently serving as President of the Georgia City County Managers Association (GCCMA), which is a state-wide agency that serves city/county managers and administrators.

Deputy Administrators, Col. Glenn Kennedy, Ret. and Matt Schlachter, are also extremely qualified. In addition to his military service, Glenn has a Bachelor of Science, Computer Science degree from the University of North Georgia, and a Master of Business Administration (MBA) from the University of South Carolina, and a Master of Science in General Administration from Central Michigan University. To top it all off, he has a Certification in Advanced Computer Security from Stanford University. WOW! What a resume.

Matt is a ten year registered Professional Engineer (PE) with a Bachelor of Science, Civil Engineering degree from Clemson University.

We have three other Professional Engineers on staff in Steve Cassell, Steve Exley, and Paula Munger. Steve Cassell has a Bachelor of Science, Civil Engineering from The Ohio State University and is also a Professional Traffic Operations

Engineer (PTOE). He has been a Professional Engineer (PE) for 16 years. Steve Exley has Bachelor of Science, Civil Engineering degree from Kennesaw State University and is a PE in Georgia and North Carolina. Our Plan Review Manager, Ms. Paula Munger, has a Bachelor of Science, Civil Engineering, degree from Clemson University and is a Professional Engineer (PE) with 26 years of experience in Georgia and South Carolina.

Executive Assistant Janeabeth Wells has a Bachelor of Science Business Administration (BSBA) degree from the University of Charleston and really should have the title of county office manager. She oversees most all county administrative operations and will complete County Clerk certification in a few

County Clerk Patrice Crawley has an Associate in Paralegal Studies from Coastal Carolina College and has been a Certified County Clerk for 14 years. She came to us after being the County Clerk in Effingham County, GA. Patrice is in charge of keeping all records of commission actions and insuring that all meetings and actions comply with state laws.

Public Relations Manager, Cassidy Harris, has a Bachelor of Business Administration, Marketing, from Georgia Southern University and a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree from Georgia College and State University. Cassidy is responsible for all media relations and keeping the public informed of county operations and special bulletins of interest to our citizens.

Jan Hardin maintains the front desk and assists all other administrative staff. Jan is our newest staff member and is also attending clerk training.

The overall staff in Columbia County is extremely talented. Many that were not mentioned are just as talented. I assign such a high priority to maintaining the present staff because they are the people that actually run county operations. Commissioners make the policies and hire executive level employees to carry out those policies, but being part-time employees, they spend a limited time on site. The hired staff is the heart and soul of a successful, high growth county.

It is imperative that we keep qualified people in the important positions and all of the positions are important.

Next month we will review some of the things of the philosophical and planning nature that I feel are very important in going forward in Columbia County.

## **COLUMBIA COUNTY ORCHESTRA UPCOMING PERFORMANCES**

#### **THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2018 Columbia County Orchestra**

FALL POPS Concert

"Movies and More" (Hits from movies)

7 PM at Hardin Auditorium of the Evans, GA Columbia County Library

FREE admission. Donations accepted.

#### **MONDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2018 Columbia County Orchestra**

FALL CLASSICS Concert

"Musical Smorgasbord" (Music of Grainger, Handel, Reed, and Wagner) 7 PM at Hardin Auditorium of the Evans, GA Columbia County Library

FREE admission. Donations accepted.

#### **SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 2018 Columbia County Orchestra**

11th Annual - "Handel's MESSIAH Sing-In"

Singers welcome to sing with the orchestra: Rehearsal at 4:30 PM. Concert dress for singers - All black.

Concert 6 PM at Kiokee Baptist Church Sanctuary in Appling, GA

FREE admission. Donations accepted.

#### **TUESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2018 Columbia County Orchestra**

Christmas POPS Concert

7 PM at Hardin Auditorium of the Evans, GA Columbia County Library

FREE admission. Donations accepted.

For more information on all of these events, please go to www.columbiacco.org

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS Check out what's going on in September at your Libraries!

All programs are drop-in except where noted as "Registration Required." For drop-in programs, space is limited to a first-come, first-served basis.

## **Adult Programs**

#### **Columbia County/Evans Library**

#### English as a Second Language (ESL) Classes

Tuesdays • 10:30 am-12:00 pm

Classes are free and open to adults whose first language is not English.

#### **Doodle Hour-Adult Coloring**

Wednesday, September 5 • 12:00 pm

Coloring books are perfect for stressed out adults. You've seen the trend, now try it!

#### **Computer Boot Camp: Part 1**

Thursday, September 6 • 10:00 am-3:30 pm

Windows - Learn the basics of Windows including parts of the computer, using the mouse, saving to a USB Flash drive, and basic computer maintenance. Call 706-863-1946, ext. 4 to register.

#### **Gadget Help with Alex**

Thursday, September 6 • 4:30-6:30 pm

Drop by the Library during these times to get individual help with your electronic gadgets. First come, first serve; no appointment necessary.

#### **Fiber Arts Craft & Chat**

Thursday, September 6 • 5:30-7:30 pm

This group meets the first Thursday of each month in the café area and is open to all crafters; crochet, knit, loom, cross stich, etc. This low-key crafting meet-up is open to people who want to learn as well as those already crafty.

#### **Adult Guitar Club**

Thursdays, September 6 & 20 • 6:00-7:30 pm

Experienced adult players, this is a chance to get together with other adult guitar players to swap tips and songs.

#### **Genealogy 101**

Friday, September 7 • 10:00-11:30 am

Learn the basics of family research. Find out what to look for, where to find it, and how to organize it. Call 706-863-1946, ext. 4 to register.

#### NanoWrimo Workshop

Saturday, September 8 • 2:30-4:30 pm

Are you prepared to write your novel in November? Come join us for a brainstorming and feedback session. We'll have a brief talk on planning your novel.

#### **Genealogy Club**

Monday, September 10 • 3:00 pm

Whether you're a genealogical expert or just learning about your roots, this is the group for you. No registration required.

#### **Pub Fiction Book Club**

Monday, September 10 • 7:00 pm • Pizza Central, Evans This month's book selection is *The Dinner* by Herman Koch. Join us at the Pizza Central in Evans!

#### **Microsoft Excel**

Tuesday, September 11 • 5:30-7:30 pm

Learn Excel basics including cell properties, auto sum, and create a simple budget. Call 706-863-1946, ext. 4 to

#### Bookkeeping, Payroll, and Business Financial Seminar

Wednesday, September 12 • 12:00-2:00 pm

A bookkeeping, payroll and business finance seminar is being presented by Tabitha Hollimon, MBA, EA and owner of Avail Bookkeeping and Tax Services. Call 706-863-1946, ext. 4 to register.

#### **Computer Boot Camp: Part 2**

Thursday, September 13 • 10:00 am-3:30 pm Internet - Learn the basics of using the internet including web sites and browsers, instruction on what they are and how to use search engines and keeping yourself safe on the internet. Call 706-863-1946, ext 4 to register.

#### **Estate Planning and Elder Care**

Friday, September 14 • 11:00 am

Hear legal strategies to protect your family and estate including: wills & trusts, estate planning, probate avoidance, powers of attorney, Medicaid and VA planning, as well as the VA Aid & Attendance Benefit. Call 706-863-1946, ext. 4 to register.

#### **Monday Night Book Discussion**

Monday, September 17 • 6:30 pm

Join us for a book discussion at the CCO Library. Call 706-863-1646 ext 4 for details about the September selection.

#### **Brown Bag Book Discussion**

Thursday, September 20 • 11:30 am-1:00 pm This month's book selection is The Mountain Between Us by Charles Martin.

#### **Greater Evans SCORE Workshop**

Thursday, September 20 • 1:00-3:00 pm

The US Government is the largest customer in the world! Come to our Government Contracting Forum and meet small business specialists from the Department of Energy, Savannah River Remediation, Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, and Fort Gordon. Register at greateraiken. score.org.

#### **Local Author Book Sale**

Saturday, September 22 • 10:00 am-2:00 pm Come meet our local authors and pick up a new book. All ages welcome.

#### **Albert: A Reflection on Slavery**

Sunday, September 23 • 2:30-4:30 pm Join us for a book discussion of Albert: History and Reflections on Slavery and Its Aftermath by Thomas Heard Robertson, Jr. Hosted by the Augusta Historical Society.

## Holocaust Education Series: Film and Lecture with Rabbi Shai

Tuesday, September 25 •5:30-7:30 pm Join us for the first event in the series. Rabbi Shai will be showing the film "One Flight For Us" and leading a discussion.

#### **Euchee Creek Library**

#### **Beginner Crochet**

Wednesdays, September 5 & 19 • 1:30 pm Fun and informal. Supplies provided. No registration required.

#### **Fiber Arts Craft & Chat**

Wednesdays, September 12 & 26 • 2:00-4:00 pm Bring your own projects-crochet, knit, loom, cross stitch, etc and socialize with others.

#### **Genealogical Society**

Thursday, September 13 • 1:00 pm Whether you're an expert or just beginning to look into your roots, this club has something to offer everyone.

#### **Adult Time-Out**

Thursday, September 20 • 11:00 am Make a coaster with decoupage and a tile. Registration required.

#### **Gadget Help with Alex**

Thursday, September 20 • 1:00-3:00 pm Get free help with your electronic devices.

#### On the Same Page Book Club

Thursday, September 27 • 10:30 am The September selection is *Guilt by Association* by Marcia Clark.

#### **Harlem Library**

#### **Doodle Hour**

Monday, September 10 • 2:00 pm Join us for an enjoyable hour of coloring and relaxing!

#### **Crochet Class: Swiffer Cover**

Thursday, September 13 & 27 • 10:30 am Join us as we learn how to crochet a swiffer cover! This class is in 2 sessions, and you must register for both.

#### **Open Sewing**

Tuesdays, September 11 • 3:00 pm Bring your projects and use our machines to finish them! Registration required.

#### Crafternoon

Wednesday, September 19 • 1:00 pm Come join us for a fun hour of crafting! Registration required.

#### **Genealogy 101**

Wednesday, September 19 • 3:30 pm Come learn how to start researching your family history. Registration required.

#### **Harlem Book Club**

Thursday, September 20 • 4:00 pm Join us to discuss *Shake, Murder, and Roll* by Gail Oust.

#### **Bingo for Books**

Friday, September 21 • 10:30 am Join us for Bingo, prizes, and refreshments! Registration required.

#### **Local Author Showcase**

Saturday, September 29 • 10:00 am-2:00 pm Come out and meet several authors from our local area. They will sign their books and answer questions about their writing.

## **Teen Programs**

#### **Columbia County/Evans Library**

#### Otaku-Rabu Club

Tuesday, September 4 • 5:00-6:30 pm Join us for a screening of this season's most popular anime!

#### **Beginner's Guitar Class**

Tuesday, September 11 • 4:00 pm

This guitar class is for ages 11-18. If you donot have your own guitar, we have up to 6 guitars for class use. Registered students can drop in any time from 4:00-5:00 pm for instruction. Call 706-863-1946 ext 4 to register.

#### **Table Top Gaming Group**

Saturday, September 15 • 12:00-3:00 pm Join us for a casual afternoon of table top gaming. Beginners welcome!

#### **Euchee Creek Library**

#### **Anime Club**

Monday, September 17 • 4:30 pm Join us for a screening of this season's most popular anime!

#### Makerspace

Monday, September 17 & Thursday, September 27 • 4:00-5:30 pm Teens 13-18 will work on their own projects under staff guidance while using library equipment including CAD software, development software, a 3D scanner, a 3D printer, soldering equipment, and general electronics tools.

#### **Teen Guitar Club**

Tuesday, September 25 • 4:00 pm Meet to discuss and share guitar tips, techniques, advice, etc.

#### **Teen Advisory Board**

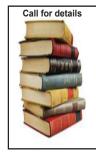
Thursday, September 27 • 4:00 pm Help us decide what programs to offer this year while getting volunteer credit.

> All GCHRL Branches will be closed Saturday, September 1-Monday, September 3.

# BOOK



Pub Fiction Book Club September 10 • 7:00 pm



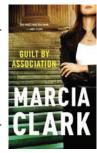
Monday Night Book Discussion September 17• 6:30 pm



Brown Bag Book Discussion September 20 • 11:30 am



Harlem Book Club September 20 • 4:00 pm



On the Same Page Book Club @ Euchee Creek September 27• 10:30 am

## **Children's Programs**

#### **Columbia County/Evans Library**

#### Child Enrichment:

Join us each week for fun programs! Learn and practice new and engaging ways of helping your child develop early literacy skills!

- · Crawlers & Pre-Walkers: Tues · 10:15 am
- Baby & Me: Tues 11:00 am & Weds 10:15 & 11:00 am
- Two-ddlers: Mon, Weds, Thurs 10:15 am
- · Preschoolers: Mon, Weds, Thurs · 11:00 am
- · Afternoon Adventures: Thurs · 4:30 pm

Call 706-863-1946 ext 3 for information or to register for children's programs.

#### **Greet a Gopher**

Thursday, September 6 • 4:30 pm

Mistletoe State Park will be here to celebrate our partnership by introducing you to their gopher mascot and some of their resident live animals! (This program will be held in place of Afternoon Adventures.)

#### **Sensory Class**

Friday, September 7 • 11:00 am

Join us for interactive stories, games, songs, and activities! We welcome children and caregivers of all abilities to this class. Call 706-447-7657 for more info.

#### **Young Authors Program**

Tuesday, September 11 • 6:00 pm Join the Young Authors' Club for snacks and creative writing/ sharing time! Grades 1-5.

#### **Family Movie Night**

Tuesday, September 18 • 5:30 pm

Watch Peter Rabbit on the big screen in Hardin Auditorium. All ages.

#### **Baby Explorers**

Wednesday, September 19 • 2:00-3:00 pm Drop in with your little explorers for this playtime for babies and toddlers! Ages 0-2.

#### **Art Ruffet**

Tuesday, September 25 • 4:30-6:00 pm Drop in and choose from a variety of crafting materials and art supplies to experiment with and create your very own artwork! Dress for a mess.

#### **Euchee Creek Library**

#### **Child Enrichment:**

- · Baby & Me: Tues · 10:30 am
- Child Enrichment: Tues 4:15 pm
- · Child Enrichment: Weds · 10:30 am

#### Minecraft Club

Saturday, September 8 • 11:00 am -3:00 pm Bring your own device or laptop with Minecraft already loaded.

#### **Family Movie Night**

Monday, September 10 • 5:30 pm

Join us for a family movie and light snacks. No registration required.

#### **Family Game Night**

Monday, September 24 • 4:30 pm

Games for the whole family. No registration required.

#### **Harlem Library**

#### **Child Enrichment**

Tuesdays, September 4, 11, 18, & 25 • 10:30 am Join us for a fun hour of stories and coloring!

#### **GA State Parks Gopher Visit**

Wednesday, September 26 • 10:30 am Meet and Greet the Gopher from the Georgia State Parks!

## Fall into Columbia County!



Visit EvansTowneCenterPark.com for tickets and more information







October 6

Where kids can meet authors, discover new ideas and experience the world of books! \$2/child to enter





## COLUMBIA COUNTY SHERIFF'S CORNER



**RECOGNIZE** techniques used by online predators to deceive.

**REFUSE** requests for personal information.

**RESPOND** assertively if you are ever in an uncomfortable situation online. Exit the program, log off or turn off the computer, tell a trusted adult, or call the police.

**REPORT** to a trusted adult any suspicious or dangerous contact that makes you feel uncomfortable.

### **INTERNET SAFETY TIPS FOR STUDENTS AND PARENTS**

#### **For Students**

Most studies agree there are 77 million of you on the Internet! Almost as many students as there are things to do online. The Internet has infinite possibilities, and it is easy to get lost. Sometimes when you are lost you discover wonderful new places, but just as easily you can find yourself in a dangerous situation. You must protect yourself from the pitfalls lurking online. To help you, follow these tips.

- Guard your identifying information (name, sex, age, address, school, teams). It only takes a little information for a predator to identify you.
- Always remember, responsible adults do not pursue relationships with kids and teens.
- Make your username generic and anonymous.
- Make your online profile generic and anonymous.
- Know how to exit an inappropriate website.
- Attachments in e-mails from strangers can contain viruses and worms.
- Pictures are great to hand to a friend, but it's not cool to send them to an Internet "friend."
- Posting your picture on the Internet gives hackers the chance to doctor your picture and make fun of you to everyone on the world wide web.
- Chat room "friends" are not always who they say they are.
- Know the rules about Intellectual Property. Do not illegally download music and movies

#### **For Parents**

Our children are the first generation to grow up with the Internet. Technology only changes the advantages kids and teens have. It does not change the way you parent. The rules may have changed with the Internet, but you are still the one making them. In an effort to help parents, below is a list of tips to protect your children. Whether you are computer savvy or Internet illiterate these tips are easy to understand, follow, and implement.

- Always keep your child's computer in an open area. Never allow a computer with Internet access in your child's bedroom.
- Communicate. There is no better tool to bridge the digital divide.
- Become a part of your child's online experience.
- Respect your child's privacy.
- Regularly review your computer files.
- Teach your child the responsible use of online resources.
- Talk to your child about online dangers. Let them know you are there to help them get out of a bad situation.
- Educate yourself on the ins and outs of the Internet.
- Talk to other parents about your experiences. It will help everyone.
- Let your child know responsible adults do not pursue relationships with minors.



5:00 p.m. Business Expo 5:45 p.m. BBQ Dinner Buffet provided by Shane's Rib Shack-Evans 6:30 p.m. Program

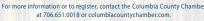


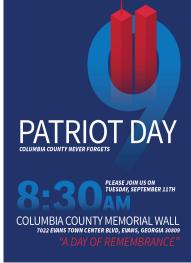
\$35 Individual Member Ticket \$45 Individual (non-member) Ticket \$325 Corporate Table of 8 CHAMBER \$325 Expo Booth (includes 2 tickets) \$525 Corporate Table of 8 + Expo Booth

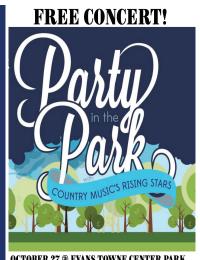
#### The community is invited to attend.

Program includes speakers from Columbia County Board of Commisioners, Board of Education, City of Grovetown, City of Harlem and Fort Gordon.









**OCTOBER 27 @ EVANS TOWNE CENTER PARK** MORE DETAILS TO BE ANNOUNCED